

Forum: Political Committee

Issue: Assessing the accountability of UN-monitored peace-building affairs

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Introduction

The term 'peacebuilding' became familiar as a UN term for the first time with Boutros Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace in 1992, where it was defined as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict." Many years later, in 2005-2006, the Peacebuilding Commission, Peacebuilding Support Office and Peacebuilding Fund were created as a part of UN Peacebuilding Architecture. The general aim of these bodies are to provide resources and work with other UN bodies to support countries in conflict and provide sustainable peace post-conflict ("The United").

There has been a clear change in the global dynamics of conflict since the end of the Cold War. Some ideologies and global powers have crumbled; others have emerged. After a decline in civil wars and conflicts for much of the late 1990s and early 2000s, major conflicts have been happening all around the world today. A number of factors such as including the growth in violent extremism, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons have been contributing to the increase in conflicts. Peacebuilding requires time to build trust and collaboration, but it also has tangible results. The concerning point is that peacebuilding has become even more needed due to the news of authoritarian and extremist movements, civil wars, and consequences of climate change such as food insecurity is another cause for conflict. For instance, droughts exacerbated by climate change have seen more conflict, and studies have shown that every degree increase in temperature corresponds to a rise in intergroup conflict by 11.3 percent (Blaine).

While establishing peacebuilding operations and programs, the United Nations should take into account the need to ensure transparency, accountability and appropriate monitoring of funds that are used for peacebuilding affairs. For a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace, particularly through the prevention of conflict and addressing its root causes, inclusive dialogue and mediation, accountability, good governance, and democracy is needed. The critical obstacle for future progress is the lack of tangible progress in the accountability for UN's peacebuilding affairs.

A significant challenge regarding the assessment of the accountability of peace-building affairs monitored by

the UN is how UN can learn and apply from peacebuilding monitoring and evaluation. Evaluation carries significant importance when it comes to providing accountability, evaluative data and findings from the peacebuilding activities can provide new ideas for reflective practice and learning. Another challenge is that U.N. peace operations and U.N. development and development agencies are directly accountable to their headquarters, not to the local communities in the conflict-affected countries they are stationed in. Developing local accountability mechanisms and bottom-up coherence in cases like the Burundi peacebuilding operation. provides strong country-level partnerships with civil society members, likeminded government officials, and/or community members, who can give the United Nations regular feedback on the effectiveness of its projects and recommend ways to improve their impact. Local accountability creates dialogue between the country office staff, and local actors, which is important for meaningful and sustainable peacebuilding.

Definition of Key Terms

Peacebuilding: Peacebuilding aims to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. It is a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for sustainable peace. Peacebuilding measures address core issues that effect the functioning of society and the State, and seek to enhance the capacity of the State to effectively and legitimately carry out its core functions (“Terminology”).

Peacekeeping: Deployment of UN military and police under the authority of the UN Security Council, which are intended to help prevent the resurgence of violence and promote long-term peace and stability in areas of conflict by protecting civilians and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid (“Terminology”).

Peacebuilding Commission (PBC): The PBC was established as an advisory body with the goal of identifying countries which are in conflict or have a risk of falling into conflict, providing policy advice to the national governments, and planning for transitions between conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding (“The United”).

Peacebuilding Fund (PBF): The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund is a trust fund established by the United Nations to support peacebuilding efforts in countries emerging from conflict or at risk of relapse. The PBF is unique in its ability to provide flexible, rapid-response funding to support peacebuilding efforts through its Immediate Response Facility (decisions within three weeks) (“The United”).

Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO): The PBSO’s main functions are to support the PBC by providing policy guidance, administering the PBF and coordinating dialogue between different UN bodies regarding

peacebuilding affairs (“The United”).

General Overview

The globe is seeing the biggest number of violent conflicts since the Second World War, and 2 billion people, or a quarter of humankind, live in regions where such conflicts are occurring. Six out of seven individuals globally suffer from insecurity of resources (“With Highest”). The conflicts in regions prone to conflict such as Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, and Libya have caused immense levels of damage, resulted in significant loss of life, and made the necessity for peacebuilding clear. The United Nations (UN) is responsible for coordinating peacebuilding efforts in countries facing conflict, and as such, it has a duty to ensure that its peacebuilding operations are accountable to the countries and communities they serve. However, assessing the accountability of UN-monitored peace-building affairs is a complex issue that requires a thorough understanding of the various factors that contribute to the success or failure of peace-building efforts. One issue is that the UN peacebuilding operations are often focused on short-term and technical solutions rather than long-term, sustainable development in the country. For short-term solutions, the UN and other international organizations fail to understand the nature of the regime, the character of the state, and the nature of interest groups that shape the political dynamics, as well as the needs of local communities. This can lead to a lack of accountability, as the UN may not be held responsible for the long-term success or failure of its peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, it is important to evaluate the UN's ability to coordinate with other international actors, such as regional organizations and non-governmental organizations, to ensure that peace-building efforts are well-coordinated and can be carried on after the UN's intervention period. Understanding the local structure, rather than replacing them with externally imported models, can become an effective route to sustainable peace.

Another persistent issue is that peace operations staff are only accountable to UN Member States and the Secretariat, not to the conflict-affected people that they are sent to help. Improving local ownership requires empowering peace operation staff to be locally accountable, not simply accountable to the UN. Local accountability encompasses more than just interactions with the local communities. It may entail engaging with local NGOs to assess UN initiatives' success, setting up monitoring units made up of a representative group of workshop attendees, creating an independent research unit of local academics who can monitor and evaluate UN interventions, or involving local stakeholders at all stages of the intervention's planning, execution, and evaluation. UN peacebuilding operations are, therefore, often criticized for lacking transparency and for not being sufficiently accountable to the countries and communities they serve. This can be due to a lack of effective communication and consultation with local communities and a lack of participation in decision-making processes.

Additionally, there have been concerns about the lack of participation of women and marginalized groups in peacebuilding efforts, which may lead to a lack of accountability to these groups. United Nations peacebuilding affairs have been criticized for not being inclusive enough, which shows itself in the case of gender as well. Though women's presence in peacebuilding operations makes a significant positive impact on their outcomes, the UN's failure to integrate them into the processes continued. In 2012, women initiated the non-violent protests against the Libyan dictatorship. However, because of the UN's design of the transition process, which divided power among regional representation, women were excluded from the processes that determined the future of the country ("Re-designing"). Not only were women systematically excluded from the decision-making processes in their country, but they were also excluded from programs that are facilitated by the UN. A 2014 PBSO report on reviewing gender contribution in UN peacebuilding showed that, by the international community's pressure, more funding for gender equality in conflict settings was provided, and recommendations were made to have local women's participation more in the peace processes ("Independent Thematic"). UN peacebuilding operations face accountability issues that arise from lack of representation of marginalized groups such as women, youth and ethnic and religious minorities.

Finally, it is important to assess the impact of peace-building efforts on the population, particularly in terms of reducing violence and promoting economic and social development. In order to effectively assess the accountability of UN-monitored peace-building affairs, it is essential to use a variety of methods and sources of information, including interviews with key actors, surveys of the population, and analysis of data and documentation. Additionally, it is important to engage in ongoing monitoring and evaluation, in order to assess progress over time and adapt peace-building efforts accordingly. Sustaining peace can be achieved only by the UN's and Member States' strong adherence to accountability. It is the duty of the UN, according to the Charter, to address people's need for socioeconomic development and protect their human rights, which carries the utmost importance for the prevention of conflicts.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Burundi

The United Nations peacebuilding efforts in Burundi have been ongoing since the end of the civil war in the country in 2005. While the UN has been able to support the implementation of the peace agreement that ended the war and the organization of democratic elections, the situation in Burundi remains fragile and has been marked by political violence and repression (Campbell). The UN has set an example for other peacebuilding activities with its focus on creating youth programs in Burundi. These are afternoon training and discussion sessions animated by youth leaders in health, gender sensitivity, and non-violent communication. In these training sessions, gender balance and gender sensitivity is ensured and the

discussions are designed to cover women's rights issues. On the other hand, sexual and gender-based violence issues, which have been prevalent in the Great Lakes region, have not been addressed properly by the UN. A renewed effort to combat impunity for gender-based violence focuses on strengthening the capacities of judicial services in the country to do their job, as well as emphasizing accountability towards women ("Women and"). Local women's experiences should be prioritized for the future peacebuilding activities of the UN in the region.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the biggest UN operation in the world with more than 15,000 soldiers, has been operating in the DRC for more than 20 years but has been unable to stabilize the country or eliminate the danger posed by armed groups in the Great Lakes area. MONUSCO has lost credibility and confidence, particularly with the locals in eastern DRC, who are no longer willing to accept the mission as it stands by helplessly as organizations like the FDLR and ADF kill civilians and seize land (Bihuzo). The UN peacebuilding's shortcomings are mostly apparent, it is because of the UN's one-size-fits-all strategy that does not have any local or regional basis. The UN's highly bureaucratic approach to peacebuilding frequently uses a general model of what has to be done to create peace, but this has failed repeatedly in the eastern DRC. The UN needs to acknowledge and take accountability for this by resorting to a more local approach.

Afghanistan

The UN organizations have clearly conveyed their interests in ending Taliban's restrictive policies towards women and girls that have confined them in their homes. Women and girls have also been banned from public parks, gyms, as well as most areas of the workforce. There have been many more recent restrictions on their freedom of movement, in line with the authorities' interpretation of Sharia law. While the United Nations and its partners are helping millions of Afghans who depend on humanitarian aid to survive, the situation about women's rights in Afghanistan can not be overlooked. Along with pressuring the international community to do more to support women's rights, the UN should also use local and regional actors and lean on them to prepare, implement and evaluate projects. For its part, the PBC should make better use of existing tools and expertise, and also cooperate with other UN bodies to strengthen the focus on women's issues. UN Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN Women, and the Assistant Secretary-General for UN political, peacebuilding and peace operations, have recently gone to Afghanistan for a fact-finding mission, to engage with Taliban leaders ("Afghanistan"). This can be an important start for the UN to collect data and take more initiatives according to the needs of local communities as well as the government.

Timeline of Events

31 January 1992	The first-ever Security Council Summit, where Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali outlines a UN response to violent conflict through peacekeeping and peacebuilding
20 December 2005	UN Peacebuilding Architecture (Peacebuilding Commission, Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Support Office) is created to help countries in conflict achieve peace.
27 April 2016	The 2016 twin resolutions on the review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282) recognize the changes in peacebuilding challenges, leading to a long-term focus on the inclusion of civil society actors, women and youth.
18 January 2018	Secretary-General's report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace calls for wide-ranging efforts to strengthen local ownership and community engagement in peacebuilding affairs.
2 March 2020	Secretary-General's first progress report on youth, peace and security which highlighted the growing inclusion of young people in preventing and resolving conflicts and in sustaining peace.
7 July 2021	After the assassination of the Haitian president, the insecurity caused by the growing presence of gangs continues to

	increase as well as the need for support from the UN.
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UN Involvement

The United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA) is responsible for leading, coordinating and implementing UN's peacebuilding efforts, by providing political and policy guidance to the UN peacekeeping operations, special political missions and other UN entities involved in peacebuilding. The DPPA's role in peacebuilding includes: Supporting the prevention of violent conflict and the promotion of sustainable peace, providing political and policy support to UN peacekeeping operations, special political missions and other UN entities involved in peacebuilding. The DPPA also coordinates with the PBC and PBF. The department's partnerships with the World Bank for the Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding and Partnership (HDPP) to be created within the PBF has been critical in providing multi-donor trust funds to countries facing conflict.

When evaluating whether there is an aggression or threat to the peace globally, the Security Council (SC) is in charge. It suggests ways of adjusting the terms of settlement and encourages parties to a conflict to settle it peacefully. The Security Council has the authority to enact sanctions to preserve or restore international peace and security under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. These might take the form of international military intervention or economic penalties. The United Nations Security Council plays a central role in peacebuilding by authorizing and directing UN peacekeeping operations and by imposing and enforcing measures such as sanctions and arms embargoes to help prevent the resurgence of violence and promote peace and stability. The Security Council also establishes and mandates UN peacebuilding missions, which are designed to support the implementation of peace agreements and assist with post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts in countries emerging from war or other forms of violence. The Security Council also receives reports from the Secretary-General and other UN bodies on the political and security situation in countries on its agenda, and it regularly reviews and updates its mandates for peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.

In 2014, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon established the High-level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO) report to increase the comprehensive data collection and assessment of UN peace operations, including UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions. The report provided recommendations on how peace operations can achieve durable peace, protect civilians, and increase focus on local ownership ("Report of").

Relevant UN Documents

Resolution 2282 adopted by the Security Council, 27 April 2016 (S/RES/2282)

Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, 12 May 2016 (A/RES/70/262)

Follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, 30 April 2018 (A/RES/72/276)

Resolution 2413 adopted by the Security Council, 26 April 2018 (S/RES/2413)

- Encompassing the entire range of peacebuilding activities of the UN, the peacebuilding agenda received an important boost following the adoption of Resolution 2413.

Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, 28 December 2020 (A/RES/75/201)

Resolution 2558 adopted by the Security Council, 21 December 2020 (S/RES/2558)

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace - Report of the Secretary-General, 30 July 2020 (S/2020/773)

Treaties and Events

Burundi and Sierra Leone became the UN Peacebuilding Commission's first African partners in 2005, indicating the expanded importance of international players in peacebuilding. The UN Peacebuilding Commission launched a variety of programs in both nations in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other donors to strengthen the state of peace, develop local conflict management capabilities, and stop future conflicts.

The UN supported the organization of the December 2008 Inclusive Political Dialogue that produced a common set of national peacebuilding priorities. The Continental Early Warning System is a conflict early warning operation within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) of the African Union, and its establishment was supported by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1809 (2008). Due to the limited capacity of the government, the peacebuilding activities of the UN in the region have taken on several missions, including a central role in supporting justice and the rule of law.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

For the purpose of promoting data literacy, analytical abilities, and data science applications in peacebuilding and other types of peace operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) has been holding "e-analytics" training sessions. A Data Peer Group was also started by coworkers for frequent discussion and debate on uses for data and analytics. By connecting the UN family to outside knowledge and also learning the importance of collecting and reading data, this was used as inspiration towards future peace and security affairs, using data-driven solutions ("Data Strategy").

Enhancing the efficacy of previous reforms and mandate delivery, improving transparency and accountability has been key components of the Secretary-General's reforms. In order to improve the UN's accountability systems, enhance results-based management, and create a strong culture of self-evaluation, the 2020-22 strategic plan for DPPA emphasized making sure that self-evaluations and results-based management are integrated into all of UN's peacebuilding activities. The Department undertook a number of evaluating activities, including After-Action Reviews, Lessons Learned studies, and self-evaluations, for the sake of accountability and learning. According to the Department's yearly Learning and Evaluation Plan, all assessments and studies have been carried out ("Planning, Monitoring).

There have also been numerous mechanisms to have a robust assessment of the accountability of the Peacebuilding Fund. Reliable data are necessary for robust assessment, therefore, in nearly 24 countries, PBF's investments in strategic monitoring provided important data on critical peacebuilding issues in the regions such as levels of intercommunal trust or the communities' confidence in the UN or NGOs. Additionally, PBF's advocacy for community-based monitoring strengthens the voice of the fund's principal beneficiaries and addresses for accountability towards decision-makers ("PBF Project").

Possible Solutions

To increase the accountability of UN-monitored peacebuilding affairs, monitoring of Member States governments, security and justice institutions, and civil society organizations, on UN officers, while on mission, should be increased. Greater cooperation between the local NGOs can help accelerate the process of gathering information about the UN peacebuilding affairs, and providing feedback will also become easier and take shorter time. This is one way that UN peacebuilding affairs can be held accountable locally. The UN can also be more involved in partnering with local civil society organizations, which allows for strengthening community structures and local ownership, as well as improving transparency, accountability, and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings.

Regular consultations can be organized between the UN and local civil society actors and communities, especially with marginalized groups, women, youth and minorities. A long-term dialogue or grievance

mechanism could be established in areas that are supported with UN peacebuilding architecture. This would allow local civil society actors and communities to engage with the UN peacebuilding officials. Through a bottom-up approach, these consultations with the UN may offer a forum for local civil society actors and communities to express their particular needs and concerns. These forums might be used to network with the UN and other parties involved in establishing and maintaining peace as well as being considered as informal peer assessments and advice on efforts for peacebuilding (“United Nations Community”).

Building awareness and infrastructure to fight against disinformation and informing the public about the peacebuilding processes is another way of creating accountability. Various social media platforms could also be used for local civil society actors to informally report on project implementation and/or communicate situations at the local level, including opportunities and challenges, good practices and lessons learned in order to allow more effective community engagement. It is important to get a variety of independent assessments about the quality and accessibility of the services provided by the UN peacekeeping programs. Public perceptions may be very different from what the institutions themselves think, therefore, public perception surveys can be useful in providing baseline data on people’s perceptions of UN peacebuilding activities in their country. Where community level consultations are not possible as an initial assessment, perception surveys can be included as an advice to the programs monitored by the UN to provide a means of tracking and evaluating progress.

Notes from the Chair

Many recommendations state that the already existing top-down only strategy has failed for more than 20 years, and a bottom-up (local) peacebuilding approach may help pave the way for a more thorough plan to bring sustainable peace to unstable countries.

The United Nations also fails to engage with local ethnic groups and strengthen links with them. The UN and other international players also fail to develop a deep understanding of regional armed groups’ beliefs and motivations. Investing in a better understanding of the identity and claims of such groups could help avoid further escalation of conflict in many regions. By addressing the ethnic and regional dimensions of the conflict, disruptive cross-border acts by armed groups might be reduced.

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